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ABSTRACT

It was hypothesized that favorability of member attitudes toward the trainer and group in T groups is a function of similarity of members' control and affection needs with the trainer's. It was further predicted that similarity in control needs would affect attitudes toward the trainer primarily during an early stage, and similarity in affection needs would influence attitudes toward the group during a later stage. These hypotheses were disconfirmed. However, strong effects associated with trainer needs were observed. Trainers low in control and affection needs elicited relatively favorable reactions at an early point and negative responses at a later point. (Author)

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Leadership Styles and Member Attitudes in T Groups[1]

David C. Lundgren and David J. Knight

A striking phenomenon in T groups, as in other small group settings, is the emergence of marked individual differences in participants' affective reactions to the leader and to the group as a whole. At various periods in group history, member attitudes toward the trainer range from antagonistic resistance to near-idolatry, while reactions to the group vary from overt resentment to intense commitment.

Although research concerning determinants of member attitudes in T groups has been sparse, it is clear that attitudes toward the trainer and the group play an important role in member outcomes. Lieberman, Yalom, and Miles (1973) have found that individual change in a variety of encounter group situations is strongly associated with positive member attitudes toward the trainer. Similarly, considerable evidence indicates that the power of a group to influence members is strongly associated with member attraction to the group.

Bennis and Shepard (1956) have proposed that individuals' orientations toward authority and intimacy are key factors influencing their attitudinal reactions to the trainer and the group. Postulating two major stages of group development, they suggest that members become polarized into competing subgroups of dependent and counterdependent individuals during an initial stage, while the group subdivides into overpersonal and counterpersonal factions at a later stage.

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In a recent, unpublished study by the first author of 7 short-term training groups, it was found that members tended to express highly favorable attitudes toward the trainer at both early and later time points to the extent that their own needs for control were similar to those of the trainer. Likewise, member attitudes toward the group at an early time point tended to be positive to the extent that their affection needs were similar to the trainer's. While a two-stage authority-intimacy sequence was not evident, the short time duration of the groups may have hindered its appearance.

The present study examines further the relationships between interpersonal needs for control and affection of trainers and members, on the one hand, and member's evaluative attitudes toward the trainer and the group, on the other. Data were gathered for a considerably larger sample of two-week T groups. It is predicted that members will show favorable attitudes toward both the trainer and the group to the extent that their own control and affection needs are similar to those of the trainer. Further, on the assumption of an authority-intimacy time sequence, it is anticipated that members will be polarized in their attitudes toward the trainer as a function of similarity in control needs to the trainer at an early time point, while member attitudes toward the group will vary sharply as a function of similarity in affection needs to the trainer at a late point in group history. Thus, with respect to attitudes toward both the trainer and the group, three-way interactions between trainer needs, member needs, and time are expected.

Method

Measures. To assess members' and trainers' control and affection needs, Schutz's FIRO-B scales were administered at the beginning of each

of the training laboratories. Following the prior study, control scores were computed by subtracting wanted control from expressed control, and affection scores were computed by summing wanted and expressed affection.

Member attitudes toward the trainer and the group were measured with a post-meeting questionnaire, the Interpersonal Reaction Form (IRF), which was modified from earlier research (Lundgren, 1971). Eighteen items from 3 positively correlated subscales, dealing with perceptions of the group on dimensions of openness, solidarity, and productivity, were combined to measure attitudes toward the group. The possible score range is from 18 to 126. An additional 6-item subscale, dealing with global evaluations of the trainer, provided the measure of attitudes toward the trainer. Scores could range from 6 to 42. The IRF was administered at the end of T group meetings in the middle of the first and second weeks of the laboratories.

Participants. Data were gathered from 31 T groups during 6 Basic Human Interaction laboratories at the NTL Institute's 1972 summer program at Bethel, Maine. Nine T groups with co-trainers were deleted from the sample, and in one case where a trainer led two different groups, one group was randomly selected for inclusion. The obtained distribution of trainers' FIRO-B affection and control scores were then used to compose 4 categories of trainers: low control, low affection (LoC-LoA); low control, high affection (LoC-HiA); high control, low affection (HiC-LoA); and high control, high affection (HiC-HiA). Criterion points were less than or equal to 8 for low affection, and less than or equal to +2 for low control. One LoC-HiA trainer was then deleted to provide an equal number of 5 trainers for each category.

Members of the 20 groups were then subdivided in a similar manner. Criteria for classifying members as LoC, HiC, LoA, and HiA were based upon

mean scores for each of the T groups. Finally, within each set of 5 groups divided by trainer categories (e.g., groups with LoC-LoA trainers), 10 members were randomly selected for each of the 4 member categories: LoC-LoA, LoC-HiA, HiC-LoA, and HiC-HiA members. Thus, a total of 160 members from 20 different groups were included in the analysis. Two members had missing data at one time point, and, because they could not be dropped without unbalancing the design, least-squares estimates were inserted for their scores.

Results

The data were analyzed using two separate three-way analyses of variance (Trainer Needs x Member Needs x Time), with repeated measures on Time. The pre-planned comparisons involved the triple interaction terms, but, since no such effects were observed, these were not performed. Appropriate post hoc comparisons were then made, care being taken to maintain an experimentwise error rate of less than 10 percent.

Member attitudes toward the trainer. The two-way interaction between member needs and trainer needs was not significant ($F=.46$; d.f.=9,142), nor was the triple-order interaction between member needs, trainer needs, and time ($F=.78$; d.f.=9,142). Thus, the data do not support the hypothesis that members will tend to hold favorable attitudes toward the trainer as a function of similarity of their interpersonal needs to those of the trainer. Nor is there evidence of a time sequence, in terms of members being polarized in their attitudes toward the trainer at an early, but not at a later, point in group life.

One significant effect was found with respect to attitudes toward the trainer, i.e., the Trainer Needs x Time interaction ($F=3.80$; d.f.=3,142; $p<.05$). While trends were quite uniform for 3 sets of groups (those with LoC-HiA, HiC-LoA, and HiC-HiA trainers), the groups with LoC-LoA trainers

showed a distinctive pattern. At Time 1, members of groups with LoC-LoA trainers tended to be somewhat more positive than members of other groups ($\bar{X}$ member attitude scores = 36.5 for groups with LoC-LoA trainers; 34.6, LoC-HiA; 33.5, HiC-LoA; 35.4, HiC-HiA), although the difference did not attain significance ($F=3.33$; d.f.=1, 142; $p<.10$). A post hoc comparison of mean scores for Times 1 and 2 reveals that members with LoC-LoA trainers tended to become more negative toward the trainer over time ($F=4.50$; d.f.=1,142; $.05<p>.025$), although the trend did not reach the .025 level. In direct contrast, members in groups with LoC-HiA, HiC-LoA, and HiC-HiA trainers became significantly more favorable over time toward the trainer ($F=6.57$; d.f.=1,142; $p<.025$). At Time 2, LoC-LoA trainers were evaluated less favorably than were trainers in the other 3 categories ($\bar{X}$s = 33.7, LoC-LoA; 37.0, LoC-HiA; 36.5, HiC-LoA; 36.1, HiC-HiA) ($F=6.68$; d.f.=1,142; $p<.025$).

Member attitudes toward the group. The two-way interaction between member and trainer needs failed to support the expectation that favorability of member attitudes toward the group would be a function of similarity between member and trainer needs ($F=.50$; d.f.=9,142), and the three-way interaction between member needs, trainer needs, and time failed to support expectations regarding a temporal sequence ($F=.22$; d.f.=9,142).

Two significant effects were obtained. The main effect for member needs ($F=4.59$; d.f.=3,142; $p<.05$) resulted from a more positive attitude toward the group by HiA members ($\bar{X}=91.10$) than by LoA members ($\bar{X}=83.39$) ($F=5.56$; d.f.=1,142; $p<.02$).

Parallel to the above results, the Trainer Needs x Time interaction effect also proved to be significant ($F=12.86$; d.f.=3,142; $p<.05$).

Members with LoC-LoA trainers held significantly more favorable attitudes toward the group at Time 1 than did members of other groups ($\bar{X}$s = 96.0, LoC-LoA; 83.1, LoC-HiA; 81.8, HiC-LoA; 85.2, HiC-HiA) ($F=12.86$; d.f.=3,142; $p<.05$). From Time 1 to Time 2, however, members with LoC-LoA trainers became significantly more negative toward the group ($F=25.20$; d.f.=1,142; $p<.02$), while members of the remaining groups became significantly more favorable in their attitudes ($F=13.89$; d.f.=1,142; $p<.02$). At Time 2, members with LoC-LoA trainers were significantly less positive toward the group than were members with LoC-HiA, HiC-LoA, and HiC-HiA trainers ($\bar{X}$s = 76.2, 90.3, 91.9, and 93.4, respectively) ($F=6.95$; d.f.=1,142; $p<.02$).

Discussion

Trainer style and member attitudes. The most striking results concern variations in member attitudes toward both the trainer and the group as a function of the interpersonal needs of the trainers. In particular, why did the LoC-LoA trainers, in comparison with the 3 other categories, tend to elicit the most favorable reactions from members at an early period in group life, yet the most negative reactions at a later time point?

It is helpful to consider the present results in the context of more general leadership theory and research. Specifically, a meaningful fit can be made with the two major dimensions of leadership behavior identified in the Ohio State leadership studies, i.e., "initiating structure" and "consideration". In present terms, HiA trainers would probably be high in consideration and would strive to create a warm, supportive, and intimate group atmosphere, while LoA trainers would be more likely to prefer a more impersonal, less intimate atmosphere. HiC trainers would tend to play a more dominant role in structuring group

activities and exerting influence upon individuals, while LoC trainers would be more prone to adopt a non-directive style.

Within this framework, it would appear that the LoC-LoA trainers represent the only category of individuals who would be likely to be low in terms of both providing structure and fostering close and personal relationships. The ultimate disenchantment of members with LoC-LoA trainers may well have been a consequence of their not being instrumental in contributing to group growth in terms of either major leadership function.

The generally favorable reactions of members to LoC-LoA trainers at an early time point may be partially explained by the relatively sophisticated nature of the sample (approximately 50% being from one or another of the helping professions). Thus, a non-directive style by the LoC-LoA trainers may have been quite in tune with members' initial expectations, while their lack of press toward intimate or close relationships may have reduced tension during an early stage of group formation. At a later time point, however, when member ties were established more firmly, trainers who may have sought to avoid involvement and intimacy appear to have elicited relatively negative member reactions.

Member-trainer compatibility and developmental stages. Contrary to the earlier T-group study, there is no evidence that compatibility of interpersonal needs between members and trainers, in terms of either similarity or complementarity, has an important effect upon members' attitudes toward the trainer or the group. Similarly, there is no support for the anticipated authority-intimacy sequence. The findings concerning member needs suggest that intimacy (affection) issues may have been salient throughout the laboratories, while authority (control)

issues were of minor importance. It is interesting to note that much of the previous research on group development has stemmed from self-analytic groups in academic settings, where authority issues may be heightened by the status gap between faculty and students. Given a sophisticated sample of adults in an intensive laboratory situation, the degree to which authority issues emerge to the fore may be quite minor by comparison. While these questions are clearly deserving of further research, the present study underscores the need to take into account both leader style and group composition in analyzing developmental phenomena in groups.

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